1:Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Saramacca

Chapter II

WHILE THE RIVER WAS HIGH

I

501 313 NOW this was a busy time of the year, and the river so full of canoes that a man floating down a lumber raft to the railhead might expect to meet ten or twelve dugouts in a day.

221 Men in laden corials were returning from the French side for the harvest festivals. They had been away eighteen months or longer, and now they were coming back to burn new rice and cassava fields for their women, and to beget new children. When the harvesting was done was a fine time for love, and a woman with a child in her womb was the very luckiest for planting a field. These returning men, in the prime of life, with powerful bodies and muscles that were as so many great snakes coiling and uncoiling underneath the gleaming moist skins were deferential toward strangers. For it would have been unseemly to thrust at the first comer their adventures on the Marowyne River, and a man who was returning with many possessions had to exercise particular care that he angered neither men nor gods. Yet among themselves they could not keep from a certain amount of swagger.

"Ai ba! Ai mati!" they exclaimed to each other in reply to the most casual comment. "Indeed, brother! Yes, friend!" This was no more than the mode of address of the [576] Awka people who live along the Marowyne, but "Ai ba! Ai mati!" stood for the password of the larger outside

1: Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
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THE COUNCIL OF THE ELDERS

"Kodo!"

"Another letter has come, Bak'a. Will you read that one, too?"

This was a communication written by a lumber factor down the river. One of the villages, it seemed, was in dispute with another over timber rights. The case was laid before the Granman by the factor, who asked that the controversy be settled promptly, since the dispute was keeping the men of both villages from cutting the lumber which had been promised him.

Yankuso now spoke again: "You have heard the message, friends. The man who buys timber asks that I settle this dispute between two of our clans. Their villages are far from here. The clans of the Saramacca people can settle their own disputes."

"Gbolo!"

"So I say, friends. I can look at the cows, but from a distance I cannot tell how many there are. It is not for us here to decide this."

"*Kweti, kweti!*—No, no!"

"It is true, friends, as the Saramacca people say, 'The G'aman's breasts are for all his children.' But it is not my children who have come to me. Bak'a," he said, suddenly turning to us, "later you will write for me to this man who buys lumber. Tell him that for the sake of sweet soup a man eats sour dumplings. So I say."

The Granman looked about him. The heat of midday filled the darkness of the council house, and old Bibifo had dozed off. The gaze of the chief fixed him.

"Mati!" he said, when Bibifo stirred. "Sleep is death!"

Slowly the Granman's eyes circled the room until they came to us.

"The Bak'a has come," he repeated, with his slow intonation, every syllable clearly enunciated. "When the Bak'a came, the rain fell. From Asindopo Lantiwe we shot guns of welcome, from Abenda Konde guns were shot. In the heavens, the gods spoke them welcome. There was thunder."

1: Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
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BAYO, THE PLAYBOY

The conversation turned to the lumbering Bayo had been doing. He had been helping some of the Gankwe men bring to the river the wood they had felled. To cut down a tree was not hard work, Bayo told us. It was, however, no easy matter to bring the trunks to the water. For in the tropical jungle timber does not grow in the convenient "stands" known to the northern forests. The searcher for rare woods will find a single purple-heart tree here, and there, some distance away, a brown-heart or one of the other trees for which the white man is willing to pay well. With machete or axe the tree is felled and stripped of its bark, and squared into a great long timber. The under part of each end is shaped so that as it goes down the river it will not split against the rocks it strikes.

Going back from the river bank are to be seen openings in the bush and these lead to places where trees have been cut. At short intervals lengths of branches are laid across them. It is over these that the timber is hauled to the river —over these main lumber ways, and over the smaller ones that must be cut deep in the bush from every felled tree to these principal paths.

Bayo had been hauling lumber. Cut and dressed, the paths made ready, the logs had been taken to the river. The Gankwe men had summoned their friends and the men of neighboring villages to help them. The weight of the hard wood is such that it takes great strength to haul the squared logs over the paths. Bayo had gone with the men into the forest, and there they had spent more than a week, eating of the rice and cassava of the men whose lumber they were hauling, and having a pleasant time of it, with joking and horseplay.

"When we haul the wood, we sing *so te* . . . until . . . " he said, prolonging his last syllables in the characteristic way.

The one whose logs were being brought to the water opened the singing by first speaking his thanks in a formal chant to those who had come to help him.

1:Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
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[539] *"You have come to go, come to go far, come to go far to bring the wood to the water. But it is long, it is far, to the river. Thank you, friends."*

Then the song was taken up by the workers and, with each rhythmic measure, the great piece of lumber went farther through the jungle on its way to the river. When he had chanted for us the greeting to the men, Bayo began to sing a song relating to men's casual exploits with
[831] women and, as he finished the song, he laughed. "White man, if you came with us, you would hear what songs the men make up about women!"

3

126 The phonograph had delighted Bayo from the first. When Apanto had summoned the spirit of his obia to fight the machine, Bayo had watched. When the white man's glue had repaired the broken belt, and the hot sun had made the machine "walk" once more, Bayo had approved.

"The machine is not weak," he had said. "I will sing for it."

And sing for it he did.

But the curse of Apanto still troubled the machine, for up the river and down there had been difficulty with it. Often when there was a particularly good song to be recorded, the belt would give, the machine would fail the white man. The story of the prowess of Apanto had gone up the river with the Gankwe paddlers, and when the machine stopped, heads nodded, and we would catch the word "obia" among the murmurs of the bystanders.

126 Bayo thought, it seemed, that the machine's proud
133 spirit was by this time properly chastened and, since twice
782 the machine had refused to work while he was singing into
796 it, twice had made him stop the song and its drum accompaniment, he decided to take matters into his own hands.

"White man," said Bayo, shortly after our return from up the river, "I will help the spirit of the machine. I will

2: Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

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Chapter Five

THE GAME TRAIL

ON the rivers we frequently encounter Djukas going downstream to Paramaribo or Albina on lumber rafts. The big logs are fastened together with lianas, twined about stakes driven into holes, and lashed to stout cross-pieces. Three paddlers stand upright on this raft and take it down the river like a canoe. 313

The lumber is arduously cut, the great trees being felled and chopped square with axes. A tree cut in the jungle will not fall to earth; the surrounding growth holds it upright. Therefore, days are spent in clearing a space of ground where the tree may come down. The vines and lianas must be cut away, and the vast buttressing roots severed. The tree is brought down in this clearing, hewn of its branches, and dragged into the water. Hardwood is too heavy to float, so [412]

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A [For caption, see category 116, p. 204; - Analyst]

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

313 hardwood trunks must be fastened between soft logs to keep them up.

At times the river drops in sheer falls. There is only one point at which the rafts can go down without jamming on the rocks; but here the men cannot go over with them, for the drop is too great. They steer for this point, keeping the logs in the centre of the current. To go over would mean being crushed to death. Moving at a high rate of speed, the men stay with the raft until the last possible minute, and then jump for some jutting rock. The raft crashes over the falls. Then the paddlers make their way from rock to rock, along the crest of the falls, back to the shore, and go down to recover the logs.

313 437 The Djukas sell the lumber that they bring downstream; it takes three days of palaver to reach an agreement on the price. They bargain quite as shrewdly as the lumber trader. Now their pouches of canvas, waterproofed with wild rubber, are heavy with many silver banknoto, or half-guilder pieces. Not as many as they expected, perhaps, but enough for their purposes.

They walk curiously about Paramaribo. The streets are crowded with a bizarre rabble, giving this little Dutch town the rare charm of the exotic. A more interesting place would be difficult to find in this modern age. Its wharves are reminders of the coming of the old slaving ships, and its white houses recall the plantations of the past. Town Negroes clatter by, some in wooden shoes brought from the Zuyder Zee countryside to this distant clime. Behind them come

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

Before starting, the Djukas take a sniff of tobacco. They 276
prefer snuffing it to smoking. They suck up their wide brown nostrils a dark liquid made from tobacco leaf soaked in water, to which a little wood-ash has been added. Each man carries a small supply, in a calabash gourd or tiny tin can. Before taking a sniff they put their fingers in the gourd and knead the leaf to get out all the juice. Then a little is poured out in the palm of the hand and snuffed up. They make a wry face at it, shaking their heads violently and spitting.

They pass it to the bahkra with a sly smile.

"Wannee?"

"No, no, no. *Me dissee no lubee; gran danke!*" which means, "I don't like this; many thanks!"

Late in the afternoon we come upon the camp of some 314
balata bleeders. It is deserted. There is an unforgettable sour stench from the last fermenting sap. For a while it is sickening and overwhelms every other odour. The balata bleeders are usually British Guiana Negroes, or Djukas trained by them, who go through the jungle tapping the sap from wild rubber trees. They produce sheets of a crude rubber, known as balata, which are traded in the white settlements of Demerara or Paramaribo. The chief industries of the bush country are balata bleeding, lumbering, and washing for gold. [313 316] ●
All of them are carried on exclusively by Negroes.

A few sheets of balata, about a half-inch thick, are hanging from poles. The Djukas assert that the shotguns of the white man cannot shoot through the stiff rubber. We stand off about fifty feet and bang away. Strangely enough, the

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

241 313 Behind each village, a quarter of a mile to five miles distant, are its provision grounds, which the women work. They consist of tiny patches of half an acre or more, carved out of the heart of the jungle by means of terrific labour. It [442] takes the men weeks of work with axes and bush-knives to clear the ground. The fallen trees, some of extremely hard wood, are cut up, burnt, or carried away. The brush is cleared with a machete, or bush-knife, which Negroes call a neefee; they swing this blade with amazing force by making the wrist the centre of its arc.

462 241 The women, as in most primitive societies, tend to the planting and harvesting of the crops. They are helped by the men of the family on some occasions, such as when the harvest is threatened by voracious parasites. The arduous labour of cultivating the stubborn earth comes so naturally to a Bush Negro woman that she is incredulous when told that elsewhere the males alone till the soil.

136 241 A leaf-cutting ant, *Ecodoma cephalotes,* that carries small bits of leaves into its nest, preys on the cassava fields. These ants march in two parallel columns, one going to the fields and the other returning, and systematically ruin the crop. The bit of green that each ant is carrying off looks like an umbrella; hence they are called umbrella ants. They live on a fungus which they grow on the cut leaves. Large numbers of them working together can denude an entire cassava field in a comparatively short time.

134 241 The jungle ground is not excessively fertile, for the incessant downpours leach out the humus, and there is not

Djuka

123 /4 cont./
675 drink something from it or merely smell it; indeed! when it was empty, the remaining men who had not yet drunk from it or smelled it had to lick it.

I was then embraced by the headmen and many of the women; they flung the right arm over my left shoulder and the left arm under my right arm and rested their heads for a moment against my right cheek.

[273] After the conclusion, while much dram was drunk, general exuberant gaiety prevailed, and only then was /5/ I told that they had purposely cut me first and given me a drink first in order to ascertain whether I trusted them completely or whether, so entirely by myself; I would have been afraid to submit to their wishes and to do what they demanded of me; they assured me that if I had refused to be the first, none of them would have wanted to conclude the agreement with me.

If, therefore, I had not conducted myself as they wished, I would have missed out completely on this alliance which was so highly important and profitable for me.

466 On the following day many of them came to tell me that
● 313 their work places on the river Cottica supplied little of the kinds of wood that had been pointed out by me for processing, but they declared themselves ready to go and process them immediately for me on the Upper Commewijne river, where they were sure of finding richer forests.

Since the last-named river was closed to them at that time by a governmental decree, I made a request for access in the year
[361] 1854, in order to be able to work with them at this river. This was granted to me, and since then a few hundred Bush Negroes have been staying there and have laid out dwellings and croplands, while they continuously, with unexampled industry, process the wood needed by me and deliver it to the sawmill.

/28 cont./

304 so much time on the desire for this kind of ostentation. When the incisions become faint through time and the growing of the skin, they are raised again by renewed carving.

/29/

Chapter XX

The Attitude toward Europeans and the Latter's Treatment of Them

461 The Bush Negroes begin to think of work when they have
313 little strong drink, powder, and lead left on hand; they leave their
439 camp and go to the work places where they are accustomed to felling trees and working these into squared timber, which they then tie together into rafts and float down the rivers in order to sell it on the plantations and at Paramaribo.

439 Some among them, especially the Saramaccaners, bring korjalen, pinda nuts (1), and groundnuts and Tonka beans (2) to

1. Arachis hypogoea L.

2. The fruit of the Dipteryx.

439 the part of the colony inhabited by Europeans; they usually exchange
648 all this for strong drink. It is to be lamented that their trade with the Whites is frequently linked with unpleasantnesses. Generally the latter treat them with contempt. This takes place all too frequently on the plantations in particular, whereby naturally fear and dissatisfaction arise among the Bush Negroes against the Whites; it is therefore not surprising that, after having been repeatedly cheated out of their fair rights, driven by suspicion and a desire for revenge, they in turn frequently try to deceive the Europeans.

In order to make clear their attitude toward the Europeans, I shall cite some proceedings which became known to me in earlier years and which even now have not completely ceased in the colony,

/33 cont./

439 When, for instance, the Bush Negro has cut down a
437 tree deep in the forest and discovers that it is almost hollow on
313 the inside, then he works it, this defect notwithstanding, into a
186 squared log, taking care to make the visible cavities above and below invisible by hammering wooden pins into it. After that he takes clay and mud and is able to make every trace disappear, a fraud which is thus rarely discovered before a piece is sawed off the log.

Also they practice a great deal of deception by unloading on the buyer as good stuff various qualities of timber of great and little value, but which resemble each other, for instance, by selling a low quality black kabbes (1) for brown hardwood (2),

1. Andira retusa H. B. K.

2. Andira called wassila among the Arrawakken /Arawak/ Indians.

two varieties which can be distinguished only by timber experts.

/34/ If they have worked timber that on one side is already somewhat rotten, or is worm-eaten or split, then they know how to place it in such a way in their rafts that the good side lies upward, a deception that can be discovered only when it has been hauled ashore and one becomes aware of it by turning each piece around and inspecting it carefully.

186 If it is possible to steal something from the Whites,
648 they will not fail to do so. They are also guilty of lying and give themselves the names of those who still possess the confidence of the Whites, which they can do with impunity because the similarity of their coloring and facial features makes it extremely difficult for the Whites to recognize them after an absence.

[829] This repeated trickery has accordingly made the Whites declare them to be scoundrels and liars, but the Bush Negroes, although they do not do so openly, say the same of them and
577 regard themselves as much more trustworthy and honest. That they do this with some appearance of justice cannot be denied; after

/60 cont./

173 1891 (1) Death of Grand Man Anato.

1. The trips of the explorer Coudreau, who stayed in the Upper Maroni in 1888 and 1891, have left no memory behind.

1902 Discovery of the gold of the Inini.
1908 Death of Apatu.
1915 Death of Grand Man Ochi.
1915 (April) Death of the explorer Jean Laveau at the Grand Soula falls on the Litani.
1917 (Nov.) Nomination of Grand Man Awensay.
1918 (2) End of the "war against William." (2)

2. This date left a very precise memory, for it marked the end of a period of great misery.

1921 Creation of the short-lived "Compagnie des Transports Aériens Guyanais" /Guianan Air Transport Company/; hydroplane accident at the mouth of the Inini.

[313] 1925-26 A rosewood factory is established first in the Boni village of Kotika, then at the mouth of Coulé-Coulé Creek on the Litani.

1931 Monteux-Richard mission.
1936 Death of Grand Man Awensay.

/81 cont./

423 The right to fish in certain rivers is held by lineages; other
222 rivers are regarded as property common to the inhabitants of a
613 village, whatever their kinship may be.
621 For example, the right to fish in Kumata Kiiki, a small
[425] creek of the Surinam bank, near the village of Kotika, is reserved for members of the Lapé lineage (the members of this lineage farmed there formerly, but they abandoned these lands, currently farmed by the Kotika people).

Maripa and Likanaon creeks, downstream from Boniville, are reserved for the inhabitants of Boniville.

Asisi Creek is reserved for the inhabitants of Asisi (Dju, Awara Bakka, and Dipélu II lineages).

423 The right to hunt cannot be reserved; everyone has the right
[224] to hunt anywhere.

[222] The right to gather and the right to cut trees for making
[313] planks or boats is generally bound up with the right to farm.

423 The right to collect underground products is completely
316 independent of the right to farm. For example, if someone finds
317 a seam of kaolin (pemba) on the lands of another lineage, he exploits it freely. This aspect of the legal conceptions of the
423 Refugee Blacks is very interesting, for it shows that even from the
316 point of view of customary law, the grand man is not entitled to
648 exercise any rights over the production of the Creole gold miners. He could demand indemnities only insofar as these gold miners farm lands over which the Boni exercise customary rights. The interminable discussions which the claims of Grand Man Anato brought on at the time of the Lawa gold rush at the end of the past century would have been avoided by a better knowledge of the customary law.